

Turn reading into a habit for your family



Does your family have certain routines that are “just the way you do things”? Do you have breakfast together every day? Eat pizza together every Friday night? Do you take walks as a family on the weekends? Why not make reading one of those habits, too?

Here are a few fun ways to add reading to your family’s schedule:

- **Visit the library weekly.** Pick a day to be your library day and stick to it. Explore different sections to add variety and interest.
- **Make reading a treat.** Let everyone stay up later to read on weekend nights.
- **Read the newspaper.** Browse the Sunday newspaper together. Read the children’s sections or comics. Even looking for and clipping coupons can be fun!



- **Schedule weekly reading dinners.** Have family members take turns selecting a book and reading aloud. Or, discuss a book that everyone has read. You can also enlist your child’s help in planning theme dinners based on books you have read.

Adding reading to your family’s routines is likely to lead to more reading, better reading and increased enthusiasm for books and learning!

Encourage your child to read by making it fun



Some children seem to have their noses constantly in a book. But others haven't yet discovered the joy of reading. Here are some ways to motivate your child and help him develop a love of reading:

- **Create a special reading nook.** This can be in your child's bedroom, on a pillow in the living room or anywhere he finds a special spot. Make sure it's a cozy place with good lighting.
- **Always have reading material on hand.** Make library visits a regular family activity, and encourage your child to check out several books and magazines with each visit.
- **Consider your child's interests.** From scary stories to adventures, there are books that appeal to every child's taste. Ask the librarian or your child's teacher for recommendations of titles.



- **Track the books your child reads.** Create a sticker chart and add a sticker for each book your child completes. Or, encourage him to make a paper chain—one link for each book.
- **Go on a library scavenger hunt.** Make a list of questions and tasks for your child to complete in the library. For example: *How many books can you find about Peru? Ask the librarian to show you how to reserve a book on the computer. Find a recipe you'd like to try.*

Play word games to strengthen vocabulary



A strong vocabulary helps build a solid foundation for reading. Boosting your child's word smarts can be fun for the whole family. Here are some activities to try:

- **Play a variety of games.** Try Scrabble, Boggle, Outburst, Balderdash or any game that requires players to come up with words.
- **Do crossword puzzles** and word searches together.
- **Select a word of the day** and have your child look up the definition. Encourage family members to use the word throughout the day.
- **Help your child create a personal dictionary.** When she comes across a new word she wants to remember—a spelling word, a vocabulary word or a word in a book—have her add the word and its definition to her dictionary.



- **Read a poem aloud.** Ask your child to guess what the next rhyming word will be.
- **Go on a word scavenger hunt.** Give your child an article to read and ask her to look for five interesting words and underline them. What does she think the words mean, based on how they are used in the article?
- **Give family members a word,** such as *big*. Ask each person to name a synonym (*colossal*) and an antonym (*minuscule*).

Learning doesn't end when the book does!



Some of the best reading times take place after your child closes the book. Once he has finished some reading, either on his own or with you, here's how you can strengthen your child's reading skills and extend the learning. Ask him to:

- **Tell you the story** in his own words.
- **Describe his mood** after he finished the story. Does he think that was what the author wanted? Why?
- **Discuss what he liked** and what he didn't like about the story. Which characters were his favorite?
- **Explain what he would do** if he were in the story. Would he have made different choices? If so, why?
- **Define one thing** or event in the story that he thought was the most important.
- **Make connections** to his own life. Has he ever felt the way one of the characters did in the book?



- **Think about different points of view.** How might the story have differed if told from another character's perspective?
- **Wonder about the conclusion.** Did the story end the way your child expected? What other endings can he imagine?
- **Talk about lessons** he has learned from the book. Does your child think the author wanted to change readers' minds about anything? If so, what?

Boost your child's reading confidence



Does your child read too quickly or seem to guess at words? Does she get frustrated when she can't sound out a word? If so, your child may have reading anxiety—which makes reading for school more difficult.

To reduce your child's stress about reading:

- **Read to her every day.** Make it a fun activity so your child will develop a love of books.
- **Don't force her to read to you.** If she wants to, great! If not, don't make her.
- **Read the same story often.** Repetition helps kids learn.
- **Act out scenes from stories** to build her confidence with words.
- **Make sure what you read** together isn't too challenging. If it's too hard, your child may give up and stop trying.



- **Make audio recordings of materials** that she finds challenging so she can listen as she reads along.
- **Set an example** by keeping reading material around and reading for pleasure yourself.
- **Be patient and encouraging.** Without pressure, your child can learn to love reading. If problems persist, talk privately with her teacher. Ask about ways that you can help at home.

Reading and writing go hand in hand



Reading and writing are closely connected skills. That's why improving your child's writing skills will also help him with his reading. And when your child enjoys writing, he'll enjoy reading more, too!

To make writing special and fun:

- **Give your child writer's tools.** Provide more than lined notebook paper and pencils. Stock his writing area with special paper, colored pencils and pens.
- **Encourage your child to keep a journal** and suggest he write in it every day. He can record personal experiences, ideas and poems. He can also jot down favorite quotations from books.
- **Help your child make his own stationery.** He can use a computer or decorate the front of blank note cards.



- **Encourage your child to write letters** to friends and relatives. Check with his teacher for a reputable pen pal organization.
- **Suggest your child make a scrapbook.** He can write names, dates and photo captions.
- **Exchange notes with your child.** Put notes of thanks and praise in his lunch box. Invite him to surprise you with notes of his own.
- **Display your child's writing** on the refrigerator or on a family bulletin board.